

March 2024



Message to Faculty

A few weeks ago, I convened the first meetings of our Inclusive Teaching Book Club in which two groups of faculty and staff are reading [*Inclusive Teaching: Strategies for Promoting Equity in the College Classroom*](#) by Kelly Hogan and Viji Sathy in advance of their [visit to campus](#) this spring. Though Hogan and Sathy are award-winning STEM instructors, their guidance is widely applicable. As they put it, “inclusive teaching practices are broader than content and discipline” (26). One of the book’s major arguments is that “structure plays a key role in inclusive teaching” because it makes visible what is often hidden in the curriculum, conveys intentionality in course design, and improves student outcomes, particularly for students underrepresented in higher education (19). The strategies they offer for creating a high structure course can be applied in classes of all kinds, and I am thrilled that faculty and staff from across disciplines are participating in our book club. (One of my goals in running it is to foster interdisciplinary faculty community.)

Regardless of whether you have read the book, I hope you will join us for [Hogan and Sathy’s workshop on Friday, April 26th](#) to learn more about their research and framework for inclusive course design.

All my best, Jessica

Program Preview

As Jill Dolan prepares to step down as Dean of the College this summer, we are honoring her with a celebratory **event**: “Teaching for the Questions.” The event’s title comes from Dolan’s 2001 book *Geographies of Learning*, a collection of essays on pedagogy, performance, and the theory/practice divide that plagues many disciplines. Each chapter ends with a practical list of approaches to the problems explored within it. In a chapter on “Performance as Feminist Pedagogy,” Dolan urges her readers to “[t]each for questions, not for answers”; to “[t]each to unsettle”; and to “[t]each to learn something” (144). On Tuesday, March 26th, in conversation with Professor of Dance Judith Hamera, Dolan will expand upon these pedagogical strategies, and reflect on her career as a leading public intellectual devoted to the American theater, an award-winning scholar of performance and theater studies, and a deeply admired university teacher and administrator. We hope you can **join us!**

Resource Reminder

We often get questions from faculty about how to approach teaching difficult, disturbing, or even offensive content in their classes. In **Teaching Tough Material**, we offer some guidance on the topic, encouraging faculty to prepare students for the subject matter—for example with content notes or through the creation of a **community agreement**—and to keep your learning goals at the center of your approach. Find this and more in the **Faculty Resource Library** on our website.

Program Highlight

Earlier this semester, Cecily Swanson, Associate Dean for Academic Advising, and I led a faculty discussion on Cultivating a Culture of Academic Integrity. Attendees shared concerns about academic integrity—particularly with the rise of Generative AI—but also strategies for helping students to understand its importance and invest in doing original work. We heard suggestions for scaffolded assignments that check in on students’ thinking throughout the process of completing a project, as well as the use of oral presentations and exams, in-class writing exercises, and papers that require personal reflection. Please don’t hesitate to be in touch for additional ideas.

Class Notes

At this August’s New Faculty Institute, I did an icebreaker about icebreakers, asking faculty to introduce themselves and share their favorite “getting to know you” questions. We gathered a fascinating array of responses—including asking about favorite memes, “weird hidden talents,” and a food that most people would not have tried but that you would recommend. The activity primed me for thinking about the possibilities of icebreakers, and I have been especially attentive to them in recent months.

Of course, icebreakers can be a good way for you to start to get to know your students and help them to get to know each other. (Consider participating yourself; they also can provide an opportunity for students to get to know you!) You can keep your icebreakers simple, asking students to respond to a question, or devise more complex icebreakers, which can be especially useful in larger classes. See **this list curated by the University of Michigan** for inspiration.

Some of the best icebreakers connect to the content of the course, meeting, or gathering. For instance, I am a current cohort member of the Keller Center’s **Program in Institutional & Historical Racism**. At the start of a workshop facilitated by the **Groundwater Institute**, the session leaders asked us to introduce ourselves and say why it is important to us to combat anti-Black racism—a challenging question that forced us each to articulate the stakes of our participation in the program. In the faculty session on Accessibility as a Care Practice in the Classroom and Beyond that I ran with Arts Fellow Christopher Núñez last month, we asked participants to introduce themselves using a self-description. According to Núñez, “self-describing refers to the practice of people describing themselves and their surroundings for the benefit of those who are visually impaired or blind. The goal is to provide an inclusive experience, enhancing their understanding and engagement.” He encourages simplicity, suggesting that people describe the color of their skin, the shape of their hair, or the pattern of their shirt, and reminds us that people need not limit themselves to describing their physical appearance; they can offer something about their personality, as well.

This icebreaker helped us all get a sense of who was in the Zoom room for the session, but also modeled an accessibility practice that we can try in our own classes and elsewhere.

Icebreakers are traditionally done at the start of a group’s work together, but you might think about using similar exercises at later points in the semester. In the session before an exam, you could ask students to describe their ideal study space or share their favorite study snack. Toward the end of the semester, consider asking students to name their least favorite character from the books you’ve read in the class or which theorist you’ve studied that they would most like to meet for a coffee.

Applications Open

The McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning invites proposals from full-time faculty for [Inclusive Pedagogy Grants](#). These grants support the revision of an element of an existing undergraduate course that you will offer in AY 2024-25 to more strongly reflect equitable and inclusive teaching practices. Successful projects will have a defined scope. For example, you might propose additions to or modifications of course content, new classroom activities or pedagogical practices, or redesigned assignments that foster access and inclusion in their broadest sense. (For more expansive innovations, consider applying to [The 250th Anniversary Fund for Innovation in Undergraduate Education](#) next year.) Priority will be given to first-time grantees.

Grantees will receive an honorarium of \$1,800.

A complete proposal, approximately 500 words in length, should include the following:

- your name and department affiliation;
- a description of your course or a link to the description on the Registrar's site;
- a description of the course changes you plan to implement; and
- a description of how these changes will enhance equitable and inclusive teaching.

For full consideration, [please submit your proposal](#) by **Tuesday, April 30th**.



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